

Administration on Aging

DISASTER SERVICES AND THE ELDERLY

Who Provides Disaster Services to the Elderly? Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes. Each year, 30, 40, even 60 or more natural and technological disasters impact the United States and its territories with such devastation that they exceed local capacity to respond. When the President declares these disaster areas eligible for assistance, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates the federal response. FEMA and the Small Business Administration (SBA) respond with grants and loans that help disaster victims recover. Congress addressed disaster response for older persons in the Older Americans Act, authorizing the Administration on Aging (AoA) to provide limited financial assistance for services through State Agencies on Aging.

When a disaster strikes, the AoA's National Disaster Preparedness and Response Office coordinates activities with FEMA and State Emergency Management Agencies, and works closely with private disaster response organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Together these organizations exchange information on the impact of the disaster on older persons in their communities. AoA's national aging network is poised to assist older persons, providing critical support such as meals and transportation, information about temporary housing and other important services upon which frail older adults often rely.

Older Disaster Victims The AoA responds to the special needs of older disaster victims. Older people often have difficulty obtaining necessary assistance because of progressive physical and mental impairments and other frailties that often accompany aging. Many older people who live on limited incomes, and sometimes alone, often find it impossible to recover from disasters without special federal assistance services.

The Aging Network Finds That Older People: Are often slower to register for disaster assistance, and once they are registered, may not follow through and complete the necessary applications to obtain assistance.

May be at higher nutritional risk in the aftermath of a disaster and may forget to take necessary medications.

Are often targeted by fraudulent contractors and "con men" that follow disasters and financially exploit disaster victims.

May be susceptible to physical and mental abuse as family stresses increase in later stages of the disaster.

***The Aging
Network has
Found That
Older People
cont:***

Because of these, and other potential problems, funds and support services are prioritized to help identify and assist older persons in registering and applying for loans, and linking older people to local, state or federal disaster advocacy services. If additional funds are available, other services may be provided to fill "gaps" or to strengthen local service delivery systems.

WHO TO CONTACT FOR HELP

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

Older persons living in a federal disaster area and requiring disaster assistance, should immediately register with FEMA for services, loans, and or grants. Remember: they are only available for a limited time following a disaster. Contact FEMA at:

1-800-462-9029

1-800-462-7585 TTY

Grants, loans, and services are further described in a brochure published by the Small Business Administration (SBA), FEMA and the AoA. This brochure may be downloaded from <http://www.aoa.gov/aoa/disaster/recovery.html>

STATE UNIT ON AGING (SUA) OR AREA AGENCY ON AGING (AAA)

To learn about available local services, contact your SUA or AAA, usually listed in the government section of the phone directory under "aging" or "elderly services." If you cannot find the number, turn to either our **Directory of State Agencies on Aging** at <http://www.aoa.gov/aoa/pages/state.html>, or call the **Eldercare Locator**, a nationwide toll-free referral service at:

1-800-677-1116

Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET

AoA provides leadership, technical assistance, and support to the national aging network of 57 State and Territorial Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 300 Tribal organizations, and thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers and volunteers.

Questions about Disaster Assistance Activities under the Older Americans Act should be addressed to Irma Tetzloff (202) 619-3268 or Marla Bush (202) 619-3996 at the Administration on Aging.